

Visual Graphical Indication Of The Number Of Remaining Characters In An Edit Field Of An Electronic Device

Cross-Reference To Related Application

- 5 This application claims priority of German Patent Application No.
102 32 907.9, which was filed on July 19, 2002.

Background Of The Invention

- 10 The invention relates to a method and to an implementation software
product for visually indicating the amount of characters, which can be still
entered into an edit field of an electronic device, and to an electronic device
having such functionality.

- 15 Usually, when entering data in an edit field of an electronic device,
such as in an alphanumeric field of a mobile phone for example, there is often
no indication for the user how many characters are still remaining for entering
before the edit field is filled up and/or the amount entered characters that can
be processed all at once in a subsequent common processing step is
reached.

- 20 The only known solutions are based on a numerical indication, such as
displaying the number of already typed characters or the number of remaining
characters. However, one of the main problems with regard to such numerical
indications is, that a user of the electronic device usually has difficulties in
25 using these indications, since users normally do not think in terms of
"characters" when they are writing a text, especially when writing a longer
text.

- 30 Accordingly, a main object of the invention is, to provide a new and
improved indication of the amount of remaining capacity for entering data in
an edit field of an electronic device.

 Accordingly the invention proposes a method for indicating the amount
of data, in particular of characters, which can be entered in an edit field of an

electronic device merely allowing a predefined amount of entered data for a common subsequent processing, by graphically visualizing the available capacity of the edit field.

5 Thus, in particular by using an electronic device having an edit field, means for entering data, preferably characters, into the edit field and means for processing a predefined maximal number of entered data all at once, wherein the device comprises a graphical element associated to the edit field for graphically visualizing the capacity available for entering data in the edit
10 field and/or by using an implementation software product adapted to perform the inventive method, especially implemented within the afore stated device, a user is much more supported when writing a text, since he can evaluate from such kind of indication information how much empty space he has still available to express what he wants.

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 Preferably, the graphical indication is achieved by a graphical element associated to the edit field with its look changeable in functional dependency to the available space or capacity.

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 For the practice it is particularly proposed to divide the graphical element into two areas wherein the percentage each of the two areas is changed in functional dependency to the used capacity or to the still remaining capacity.

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 Additionally or as an alternative, the graphical element may be divided in several sub-portions, each of which is representing a predefined amount of capacity, so that for every amount of capacity already used one of these sub-portions is visually displayed, filled up or deleted.

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 According to a very preferred embodiment it is further proposed to change the look of a text cursor proportional to the number of remaining characters which can be still entered, since the attention of the user normally is focused already on the text cursor while he is writing the text.

Even the invention is preferably conceived for mobile phones, the invention can be similarly used in any electronic device where the user is prompt to enter a text, especially long texts, to paint pictures and/or to enter other data.

- 5 The invention is further proposing an implementation software product designed to perform or at least to support the inventive approach.

Brief Description Of The Drawings

10 Subsequently the invention is exemplarily described with regard to preferred embodiments and with regard to the attached drawings, in which:

15 FIG. 1a is schematically showing a first inventive example of the change of a graphical element look for proportionally indicating the amount of remaining characters,

FIG. 1b is schematically showing a second inventive example of the change of a graphical element look for proportionally indicating the amount of remaining characters, and

20 FIG. 2 is schematically showing a mobile phone as a preferred embodiment of an electronic device incorporating the inventive graphical element according to FIG. 1a as a text cursor.

Detailed Description

25 Regarding first FIG. 2, a mobile phone as a preferred embodiment for the inventive electronic device is schematically depicted. However, it is mentioned that the electronic device can be, in substantial, any electronic device having an edit field for visually entering data, such as characters for writing a text message. Accordingly, further preferred applications for the invention are electronic devices like a personal computer or a note book or a
30 PDA (Personal Digital Assistant).

In practice, the mobile phone according to FIG. 2 is proposed to be adapted to operate on a GSM-standard (Global System for Mobile Communication) or UMTS-standard (Universal Mobile Telecommunication

System) and is preferably adapted to support GPRS (General Packet Radio Services).

Regarding the inputting of characters with regard to the mobile phone as depicted in FIG. 2 in more detail, the mobile phone has an edit field 11, for entering, editing and visualizing entered characters. The characters are entered by pressing respective keys of a keyboard 12. However, even the entering of characters by using a microphone 13 connected with a speech control implemented within the electronic device or by using a touch screen monitor for entering the characters into the edit field is comprised by the invention.

The entered characters may be part of a text message to provide a so-called SMS (Short Message Service), since the exchange of text messages between different mobile phones has become very popular. In particular young people use the GSM-based SMS service very frequently to communicate with their peer group.

For sending the SMS-message, first a respective menu item implemented within the mobile phone is selected by correspondingly manually pressing at least one of the selection keys 14 for subsequently entering the text message by pressing the respective keys of the keypad 12. When the SMS-message is completed, a telephone number of the intended recipient is entered by selecting the corresponding telephone number by use of the menu selection keys 14 or in turn, by entering the telephone number by pressing the respective keys of the keypad 12. Finally, the text message is sent using the short message service based on the corresponding selection by means of the keys 14.

However, in particular with regard to such a SMS-message, the number of characters which can be sent all at once is restricted, such as to 160 characters for example based on GSM.

Thus, in particular when the user wants to write long messages, with

the invention of graphically indicating the remaining amount of characters which can be entered for a common subsequent processing, the user is supported in optimally using the capacity for entering characters within the edit field 11.

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Moreover, the edit field 11 is comprising a text cursor 15, which usually is represented as an all-black box. Since the attention of the user however, is focused time and again on the text cursor 15 while he is writing the text, the visual indication of the still available space in the edit field is preferably

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embedded in the cursor 15.

Therefore, within the preferred embodiment as depicted in FIG. 2 the text cursor 15 is used for graphically indicating the remaining space or even capacity for still entering data, such as characters, which can be subsequently

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processed all at once.

The logical connection or functional dependency between the changeable look of the text cursor 15 and the available amount of capacity is performed in practice by use of a processor unit integrated within the mobile

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phone. For example, the text cursor 15 is subdivided at least into two areas,

such as a black and a white area, wherein the percentage each of the two areas is changed in functional dependency to the used capacity or to the still remaining capacity. Thus, for each inputted character a specific amount of the text cursor 15 is field up with black, in case the text cursor 15 is white when

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the entire capacity is available, or is field up with white, in case the text cursor 15 is black when the entire capacity is available.

Accordingly, in Fig. 2, the text cursor 15 is indicating, that approximately the half of the available edit field 11 is used, as explained in

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more detail below.

FIG. 1 a) and b) are representing two schematic sequences of possible indications that are proportional to the amount of remaining capacity or space for entering data, especially for entering characters, until the edit field 11 or

the capacity for a further common processing step is filled up.

Regarding next Fig. 1 a), the assumption that the cursor 15 is represented as an all-black box. Within the inventive approach, such common text cursor black box, as referenced by reference sign 1a, is indicating, that all characters are still available, i.e. 100 % of the maximal capacity or space for entering data is still available.

Regarding the changed look of the cursor 15, as referenced by reference sign 2a, the black painted portion is reduced approximately to the half, whereas a white portion is extended to the half of the graphical cursor box element, in order to indicate that approximately half of the maximal useable field or capacity is already used and hence nearly the half of the capacity is still available.

Correspondingly the changed look of the cursor 15, as referenced by reference sign 3a of FIG. 1 a), is indicating that about 30% of the initial capacity is still available. If the whole graphical element has completely changed its look, such as from black to white, as referenced by reference sign 4a of FIG. 1 a), then no further characters are available, for writing a text.

Consequently, the percentage of the black portion of the graphic element, such as the text cursor 15 of FIG. 2, is proportional to the number or the amount of remaining characters, whereas the percentage of the white portion of the graphic element, as depicted in FIG. 1 a) is proportional to the number or the amount of space or capacity already used.

It is stated however, that other shapes of cursors can be used as well. Moreover, even a separate graphic element which is changing its look in functional dependency to the available space and/or to the space already used, can be integrated into the display of the edit field 11. Thus, it is not necessary to use the cursor itself for graphically indicating the available entry space or capacity.

For example FIG. 1 b) is depicting a similar sequence of a kind of pillar which is growing up proportional to the amount of used capacity.

Based on the afore mentioned 160 characters to which a SMS-
5 message according to the GSM-standard is restricted, this can be accomplished for instance by subdividing the entire pillar in 160 portions by means of 40 rows with respectively 4 columns. Thus, each portion is representing a capacity amount of 0,625 percent and for each character entered, one of these portions is filed up in an application specific color or
10 user based selected color.

Accordingly, if three of the 160 portions of the graphic pillar-like element are already filed up, as schematically indicated by reference sign 1b of Fig. 1 b), approximately 1,875 percent of the entire available capacity is
15 already used. Consequently, the look of the graphical element, schematically referenced by reference sign 2b is nearly filed up to the half and hence, approximately the half of the capacity is used and the half of the capacity is still available. By further entering data or characters, the look of the graphic element is changed via the condition, as referenced by reference sign 3b,
20 indicating that approximately 3/4 of the capacity is used to the look referenced by reference sign 4b indicating that the entire space ore capacity is used.

Since however, for the graphical indication substantially any kind of graphical element can be used, the inventive scope is not restricted to the use
25 of the text cursor for the graphic element. To put the inventive approach into practice, it is proposed to provide with or for the electronic device a plurality of elements or symbols among which the user of the electronic device may choose a preferred one for the visual graphical indication. Furthermore, the inventive approach is preferably supported or entirely provided by the
30 implementation of a correspondingly designed software.

Moreover, in particular with regard to the specific equipment of the respective electronic device, the graphic indication can be realized and/or supported by changing the color, such as for example by going through a

- specific color range in dependency of the available capacity. As an alternative or in addition the graphic indication can be supported by flashing the element, preferably by indicating the used space or capacity by changing the flashing frequency. As a further possibility, the graphic indication can be additionally
- 5 supported by acoustic signals.